

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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REMARKS OF THE HONORABLE THOMAS S. KLEPPE, SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, AT THE CLARK FOUNDATION, PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA, CONCERNING THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, SEPTEMBER 13, 1976.

I have been told by some people who have a lot of children that they love every one of them--but can't always remember their names.

As Secretary of the Interior, I have the responsibility for 287 parks and 378 wildlife refuges. I love every one of them, but I sure can't remember all their names.

One name which is well-fixed in my mind, however, is that of San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. This has become a very special place to me.

Not because it is more important than other refuges in our efforts to protect wildlife and maintain an ecological balance.

But because some people have made an extraordinary commitment to make this refuge a special place.

My personal involvement in this project began last spring when June Duran and Travis Mendoza presented to me the intention of the Clark Foundation to raise \$600,000 for facilities needed at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

At that time, I told them that "this is what America is all about"--private interests combining with the Federal Government to provide a substantial benefit to a large number of people and to the wildlife preservation movement.

The Clark Foundation over the years has contributed to many other worthwhile programs. This contribution to construct needed facilities for the refuge is somewhat of a departure for the foundation--and I believe that the precedent is a bold and noble venture. I hope that many other private organizations and individuals will follow the example.

With your contribution and the funds approved by Congress, we will be constructing an environmental education center at Alviso and a headquarters-interpretive center at the south end of Coyote Hills.

This will give the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service the facilities to provide for visitors and to better administer the refuge.

Most significantly, we will be extending the benefits of the refuge beyond wildlife protection. This refuge is important in providing habitat for ducks, geese, and other birds. It is important to some endangered species. This is the primary purpose of the 32 million acres of refuge in the United States.

But we miss a good portion of the value of the refuges if we cannot provide adequate facilities for recreational and educational use by the people. And public use of the refuges without proper facilities too often results in damage to the wildlife we are attempting to protect.

It is especially important in a densely populated area such as the Bay region that we have facilities which make it possible for people--especially young people--to visit the refuges and learn from them without doing damage to them.

Special efforts will be made here to fit the facilities in with the environment. The legislation authorizing the project stipulates the buildings are to be energy innovative--so we are looking for some funds from the Energy Research and Development Administration to help us install alternative energy systems in the structures.

This refuge was authorized by legislation in 1972, and we are on the verge of a major breakthrough in the acquisition of the authorized 22,000 acres. Land acquisition seldom goes smoothly, and this has been no exception, but we are confident the major hurdles are about to be cleared.

Nationally, during the past two decades the size of our refuge system has doubled. When we bring the Alaska refuge lands into the system, it will double again.

During the past two decades, the number of visitors to the refuges has quadrupled. Some 30 million visitors a year are using the refuges. Yet staffing has not increased in a decade.

So we have acquired a great deal of park and refuge land, but we have not kept pace in development of the land or in staffing.

Shortly after I became Secretary of the Interior last fall, President Ford indicated he was concerned about this situation. Although economic conditions were improving at that time, we did not yet have a clear trend. Now the economic conditions show that we have recovered from the worst recession in 40 years. We can make some new initiatives.

Two weeks ago in Yellowstone National Park, the President announced his Bicentennial Land Heritage Program which commits the Federal Government to a \$1.5 billion, 10-year drive to improve the park and refuge systems. The addition of 500 employees to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is part of the plan.

We are very excited about President Ford's program. It is a landmark proposal for the park and refuge systems. Some members of Congress complain that it is too late in the legislative year. But I have been in Congress, and I know how quickly legislation can be passed when it clearly has merit--as this legislation does.

Now--let me make it clear that \$1.5 billion doesn't solve all the problems of the parks and refuges. Our fish and wildlife people contend they alone need considerably more than this just to buy land for wildlife protection.

What we need is more concerned citizens--like Mrs. Duran and the Clark Foundation, and those who will make donations--if we are really to solve our problems and to fulfill the dual role of the refuges in serving both wildlife and people.

The beauty of this approach is that it gives the people of an area extra clout in calling the shots--you can influence the government spending to get it where it is really needed--such as for facilities that are both wildlife protecting and people educating in a major metropolitan center. And the approach is beautiful because it gives the people of an area a special feeling of accomplishment and pride in the refuge and its facilities.

On behalf of the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, I want to congratulate everyone who has been involved in this wonderful program.

Congressman Edwards certainly was in the forefront in the House of Representatives. Congressmen Talcott, McCloskey, and Ryan did more than their share.

Mrs. Duran and members of the Board of Directors of the Clark Foundation have made a major commitment to improve the environment and provide education and enjoyment of nature for the people of the Bay area.

This is an exciting venture, and I thank you for inviting me to be a part of it.

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